
USE OF INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

APPLICATION: All state employees, including employees of agencies exempt from coverage of the Virginia Personnel Act

PURPOSE	To establish a policy for use of the Internet and the state's electronic communication systems for VSDB and its employees.
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DEFINITIONS

Computer Network	Two or more computers that can share information, typically connected by cable, data line, or satellite link.
Electronic Communication Systems	System used as a means of sending and receiving messages electronically through connected computer systems or the Internet, such as e-mail or voice mail.
Internet	An international network of independent computer systems. The World Wide Web is one of the most recognized means of using the Internet.
Users	All employees of the Commonwealth who use VSDB Internet and/or electronic communication systems. NOTE: This applies to consultants, contract personnel or other non-employees such as volunteers or interns who access VSDB's Internet or electronic communication systems.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR USE OF INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS	All users must follow this policy and any additional policy that may be adopted by VSDB or institution of the Commonwealth where the user is working.
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Business Use	VSDB computer systems that allow access to the Internet and electronic communication systems are the property of the Commonwealth and are provided to facilitate the effective and efficient conduct of State business. Users are permitted access to the Internet and electronic communication systems to assist in the performance of their jobs in a manner which is consistent with all the provisions set forth in this policy.
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Personal Use	Personal use means use that is not job-related. In general, incidental and occasional personal use of VSDB's Internet access or electronic communication systems is permitted; however, personal use is
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prohibited if it:

- interferes with the user's productivity or work performance, or with any other employee's productivity or work performance;
- adversely affects the efficient operation of the computer system;
- violates any provision of this policy, any supplemental policy adopted by VSDB, or any other policy, regulation, law or guideline as set forth by local, State or Federal law. (See Code of Virginia §2.1-804-805; §2.2-2827 as of October 1, 2001.)

NOTE: Users employing the VSDB's Internet or electronic communication systems for personal use must present their communications in such a way as to be clear that the communication is personal and is not a communication of VSDB or the Commonwealth.

No Expectation of Privacy

No user should have any expectation of privacy in any message, file, image or data created, sent, retrieved or received by use of VSDB's equipment and/or access. VSDB has the right to monitor any and all aspects of agency computer systems including, but not limited to, sites, instant messaging systems, chat groups, or news groups visited by users, material downloaded or uploaded by users, and e-mail sent or received by users. Such monitoring may occur at any time, without notice, and without the user's permission.

In addition, electronic records may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and, therefore, available for public distribution.

Prohibited Activities

Certain activities are prohibited when using the Internet or electronic communications. These include, but are not limited to:

- accessing, downloading, printing or storing information with sexually explicit content as prohibited by law (see Code of Virginia §2.1-804-805; §2.2-2827 as of October 1, 2001);
- downloading or transmitting fraudulent, threatening, obscene, intimidating, defamatory, harassing, discriminatory, or otherwise unlawful messages or images;
- installing or downloading computer software, programs, or executable files contrary to policy;
- uploading or downloading copyrighted materials or proprietary agency information contrary to policy;
- uploading or downloading access-restricted agency information contrary to policy or in violation of agency policy;
- sending e-mail using another's identity, an assumed name, or

anonymously;

- permitting a non-user to use for purposes of communicating the message of some third party individual or organization;
- any other activities designated as prohibited by VSDB policy at any future time.

Security

The distribution of electronic communications is difficult to control and routing mistakes can easily occur. Copies of electronic communications can be forwarded without the sender's knowledge or permission to unintended recipients. Therefore, electronic communications should be drafted and sent with at least the same level of care, professional judgment and discretion as paper memoranda or documents.

USER RESPONSIBILITIES

The conduct of computer users who access the Internet or send e-mail containing a VSDB domain address (i.e., ____@vsdb.state.va.us) may be perceived as reflecting on the character and professionalism of the VSDB. When engaging in such conduct, whether for personal or official purposes, employees are expected to do so in a responsible and professional manner.

All users are responsible for exercising appropriate care to protect VSDB computer systems against the introduction of viruses. When using the VSDB Internet access or electronic communications, equipment and capability, individuals must:

- use the Internet or electronic communication systems only in accordance with State and VSDB policy;
- maintain the conditions of security (including safeguarding of passwords) under which they are granted access to such systems;
- check with the Technology Coordinator prior to downloading or accessing a file or document if the source of the file or other circumstances raises doubts about its safety.

VIOLATIONS

Violations of this policy must be addressed under Policy 1.60, Standards of Conduct Policy, or appropriate disciplinary policy or procedures for employees not covered by the Virginia Personnel Act. The appropriate level of disciplinary action will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the VSDB Superintendent or designee, with sanctions up to or including termination depending on the severity of the offense, consistent with Policy 1.60 or the appropriate applicable policy.

AUTHORITY

This policy is issued by the Department of Human Resource Management pursuant to the authority provided in Chapter 10, Title 2.1 [§2.1-114.5(13)] of the Code of Virginia (Title 2.2, §2.2-1201 as of October 1, 2001) and §2.1-804 (§2.2-2827 as of October 1, 2001) et. seq.

Further, The Acts of the Assembly 1999, c. 384, cl.2, provides: “That the heads of state agencies whose officers and employees are exempt from the Virginia Personnel Act pursuant to Section 2.1-116 shall adopt the acceptable Internet use policy required by this act to be developed by the Department of Human Resource Management and may supplement the Department’s policy with such other terms, conditions, and requirements as they deem appropriate.”

INTERPRETATION

The Director of the Department of Human Resource Management is responsible for official interpretation of this policy, in accordance with §2.1-114.5(13) of the Code of Virginia (§2.2-1201 as of October 1, 2001).

RELATED POLICIES

Policy 1.60, Standards of Conduct

Policy 6.10, Personnel Records Management
